

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XF/XI, XW, UR, XT
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SUBJ: SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN THE HORN

REF: 77 MOSCOW 18743 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: EMBASSY ACCEPTS REFTTEL ANALYSIS AS PLAUSIBLE
EXPLANATION OF SOVIET PERCEPTION OF REALITIES IN HORN
AND OF CONSIDERATIONS WHICH HAVE LED USSR TO MOVE INTO

ETHIOPIA SO HEAVILY. EMBASSY'S VIEW OF ETHIOPIAN REALITIES DIFFERS FROM SOVIET', HOWEVER. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT TIME IS NECESSARILY ON THEIR SIDE, ALTHOUGH SOVIET INFLUENCE LIKELY TO GROW AND TO REMAIN PREDOMINANT AS LONG AS INTERNATIONAL WAR AND CIVIL WAR CONTINUES, AND PROBABLY FOR SOME YEARS THEREAFTER. IN LONG, RPT LONG RUN, WE QUESTION WHETHER SOVIETS WILL BE ANY MORE SUCCESSFUL IN RETAINING PERMANENT FOOTHOLD HERE FOR SELLING THEIR MODEL TO OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES THAN THEY HAVE BEEN ELSEWHERE IN THIS PART OF THE CONTINENT. CUBAN FACTOR REQUIRES SEPARATE ANALYSIS. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY FINDS FRENCH SOURCE'S ANALYSIS OF SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN HORN A PRECEPTIVE AND PLAUSIBLE STATEMENT OF HOW SOVIETS CURRENTLY VIEW TREND OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS PART OF WORLD. AT SAME TIME, WE THINK SOME OF SOVIET PREMISES REGARDING ETHIOPIA ON WHICH THEY MAKE THIS APPRAISAL ARE QUESTIONA?)3, IF NOT DEAD WRONG.

2. THERE ARE CERTAIN PARALLELS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA'S PRESENT PREDICAMENT AND EARLY YEARS OF SOVIET UNION, BUT IT IS DANGEROUS TO DRAW SWEEPING CONCLUSIONS FROM THAT FACT. TO BE SURE, THOSE ETHIOPIANS WITHIN THE DIRG WHO ARE GENUINELY COMMITTED TO SOVIET LINE ARE BEING GIVEN RELATIVELY FREE HAND TO RUN SHOW FOR TIME BEING, BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN A UNIFIED INTERNAL IDEOLOGY HAS

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BEEN FORGED. THERE ARE STILL NUMEROUS INTELLIGENT ETHIOPIAN LEADERS WHOSE VIEWS, WHILE THEY MAY TEND TOWARDS MARXISM PER SE, REJECT CORRUPTED SOVIET VERSION THEREOF, AND EMBASSY IS ALSO STILL RELUCTANT TO PLACE PMAC CHAIRMAN MENGISTU WITHIN IDEOLOGY GROUP. HIS ACTION AGAINST ME'ISON LEFTISTS IN AUGUST AND HIS OVERTURES TO US IN SUMMER, OPPORTUNISTIC THOUGH LATTER MIGHT HAVE BEEN, SHOW DEGREE OF PRAGMATISM WHICH NOT LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR OVERNIGHT, DESPITE PRESENCE OF SOVIET GENERALS IN PALACE. DESPITE OUTWARD MANIFESTATIONS OF IDEOLOGICAL COMPATIBILITY, THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN AMPL INDICATIONS OVER PAST SIX MONTHS THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH USSR IS FRAGILE ONE, SUBJECT TO UPS AND DOWNS, AND FRAUGHT WITH DISTRUST. PRESENT COURSE IS CLEARLY ON UPSWING. STILL, OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF ETHIOPIAN POPULATION ALMOST CERTAINLY SEES LITTLE IN COMMON BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES EXCEPT FOR POLITICAL MODEL FOR ENABLING SMALL GROUP AT TOP TO REMAIN IN POWER AND SYSTEMATICALLY TO REMOVE ITS ENEMIES.

3. USSR BY NOW HAS GOOD REASONS TO DISTRUST MUSLIM ARAB STATES. ETHIOPIA IN TURN HAS HISTORICALLY VIEWED

ITSELF AS VICTIM OF ARAB RELGIOUS JIHAD AND TERRI-
TORIAL ENCROACHMENT. MOREOVER, SHE SEES CURRENT EXTER-
THREATS TO EPMG AND TO ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL IN-
TEGRITY AS BEING OF ARAB INSPIRATION AND ORIGIN. TO
THAT EXTENT, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT SOVIETS, HAVING
STRUCK OUT IN EGYPT AND SUDAN, AND HAVING FAILED IN
ITS ABORTIVE EFFORT TO MAINTAIN FOOTHOLD IN BOTH
SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA, SHOULD OPT FOR FULL-SCALE EFFORT
IN MOST IMPORTANT MARXIST STATE THAT HAS EMERGED TO DATE
IN RED SEA AREA. QUESTIONS OF ETHIOPIAN PRO-SOVIET
CONTINUITY AND RELIABILITY ARE STILL VERY MUCH UP IN
AIR, HOWEVER, AND IT IS PRESUMABLY FOR THAT VERY REASON
AS WELL AS FOR IDEOLOGICAL AND PRESTIGE CONSIDERATIONS,
THAT SOVIETS ARE INVESTING SO HEAVILY IN MILITARY
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EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER TO BOLSTER A GOVERNMENT THAT
WITHOUT SUCH HELP ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD FACE LOSS OF
LARGE REGIONS OF EXISTING ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY AND EVEN
POSSIBLY ITS OWN OVERTHROW IN WAKE THEREOF.

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4. AT SAME TIME WE DO NOT ACCEPT FRENCH SOURCE'S REASONING THAT SOVIETS HAVE COMPLETELY WRITTEN OFF SOMALIA,
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ALTHOUGH BY NOW THEY MUST HAVE WRITTEN OFF SIADE BARRE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE THAT EVEN MOST DIEHARD PRO-SOVIET SOMALI OFFICIALS WOULD BE WILLING TO ASSIST IN OVERTHROWING SIAD BARRE IN ORDER TO REESTABLISH THE OLD RELATIONSHIP. SUCH AN OVERTHROW COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH FORCE OF ARMS, A LA CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BUT HERE WE ARE VIOLATING EMBASSY MOGADISCIO'S DOMAIN.

5. TO DATE, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT MOSCOW IS PREPARED TO POUR IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE COMPARABLE TO THE MILITARY RESOURCES IT HAS COMMITTED. ITS EFFORTS IN FORMER FIELD HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO A HOSPITAL, DOCTORS, BOOK DONATIONS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, RATHER THAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PER SE. EGYPTIANS HERE AND OTHERS CONSTANTLY ACCUSE US AND WESTERN COUNTRIES OF HAVING FALLEN FOR OLD SOVIET DODGE, BY ALLOWING SOVIETS TO PROVIDE ARMS WHICH GIVE THEM INFLUENCE OVER THE COUNTRY, WHILE WESTERN AID PROJECTS SPARE SOVIETS MORE ONEROUS AND FROM THEIR STANDPOINT, LESS PRODUCTIVE TASK OF SOLVING ETHIOPIA'S ECONOMIC WOES. SOVIET ATTITUDES MAY CHANGE, IF AND WHEN ETHIOPIA NO LONGER HAS SEVERAL WARS TO FIGHT, BUT FOR MOMENT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IS AND PROBABLY WILL REMAIN STRICTLY MILITARY/POLITICAL, ALTHOUGH WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES ARE BEGINNING TO TAKE ACTIVE DEVELOPMENT ROLE, PERHAPS AS SURROGATES. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER USSR WILL THEN BE WILLING TO INVEST HEAVILY IN ETHIOPIA ON NON-MILITARY SIDE, AS IT DID IN CUBA AND SOME THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.

6. IF ETHIOPIA IS TO BECOME "MODEL" FOR OTHER AFRICAN AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, MANY THINGS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CHANGE RADICALLY. THROUGHOUT AFRICA AT PRESENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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ETHIOPIA IS VIEWED MORE AS MODEL OF CHAOS, EXCESSIVE BLOODLETTING, LACK OF DUE PROCESS, AND INTemperENCE, RATHER THAN AS BLUEPRINT TO BE EMULATED BY OTHER STRUGGLING STATES. TO BE SURE, THERE MAY BE SOME AFRICAN POLITICIANS WHO DERIVE SOME LESSONS FROM ETHIOPIAN EXAMPLE.

7. SOVIETS ARE NOT FOOLISH, AND THEY ARE NO DOUBT FULLY AWARE OF MAGNITUDE OF THEIR GAMBLE IN ETHIOPIA. THEY ARE RACING AGAINST TIME TO HAVE ETHIOPIANS OF THEIR PERSUASION PLACED IN KEY POSITIONS WITHIN BUREAUCRACY AND INFILTRATED INTO MILITARY RANKS, AS WELL AS TO HASTEN CREATION OF MASS ORGANIZATIONS ALONG SOVIET MOLD. THEIR HOPE IS THAT FRAMEWORK THEREBY ESTABLISHED WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO BEAR UP EVEN AFTER MASSIVE ARMS BUILDUP NO LONGER SUPREME FACTOR DETERMINING ETHIOPIAN CHOICE OF FRIENDS. SOVIETS HAVE BEEN BLINDED BY SUCCESS OF THEIR OWN EXAMPLE MORE THAN ONCE BEFORE, HOWEVER, AND FROM THIS FANTASY POINT THEY COULD WELL BE MISCALCULATING HERE AGAIN. SOVIET POSITION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN STRONG AS LONG AS ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY DIFFICULTIES CONTINUE, AND THAT COULD BE SEVERAL YEARS MORE. THEREAFTER, DISAFFECTION IS CERTAIN TO SET IN SOONER OR LATER, AND SOVIETS' PERHAPS BOLDEST EXPERIMENT IN AFRICA TO DATE WILL DEPEND ON PERVASIVENESS OF SYSTEM ETHIOPIAN FOOLS WILL BY THEN HAVE DEVELOPED AT THEIR BEHEST.

8. CONTRARY TO MANY ESTIMATES, EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT MENGISTU HAS STAYING POWER TO REMAIN IN CONTROL OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT, BARRING COMPLETE MILITARY COLLAPSE ON WAR FRONTS OR EVEN POSSIBLE ASSASSIN'S BULLET. HIS GOVERNMENT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT AS POPULAR NOW AS WHEN HE TOOK CONTROL NEARLY A YEAR AGO, BUT SUPPORT COULD RISE AGAIN DRAMATICALLY IF FORTUNES OF WAR IMPROVE, AS THEY ARE LIKELY TO DO SOON, CONFIDENTIAL

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AT LEAST IN OGADEN. AT ANY RATE, WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN POPULARITY IS THAT REGIME IS RELATIVELY UNI-

FIED AT TOP LEVELS, AND THERE ARE NO RIVALS WITH ANY POWER BASE THAT THREATEN TO OVERTHROW PRESENT CENTRAL LEADERSHIP. WE LIKEWISE SEE NO REASON WHY ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY CANNOT TOLERATE SOVIET/CUBAN OR ANY OTHER METHODS OF TOTALITARIAN CONTROLS AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, SINCE FEUDAL SYSTEM OF PAST OFTEN RELIED ON MUCH THE SAME, IF SOMEWHAT MORE BENIGN, METHODS. BASIC PROBLEM FOR SOVIETS IS RATHER THAT NO ETHIOPIAN REGIME, SOCIALIST OR OTHERWISE, IS LIKELY TO RELY FOREVER ON SUCH A HEAVY DOSE OF FOREIGN ADVICE AND GUIDANCE AS SOVIETS ARE INFUSING AT PRESENT TIME, ESPECIALLY GIVEN TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN XENOPHOBIA.

9. CUBAN FACTOR IN ETHIOPIAN/MARXIST WORLD EQUATION IS STILL MORE OF AN "X" AND NEEDS A GREAT DEAL MORE ANALYSIS WHICH THIS EMBASSY IS NOT PREPARED TO MAKE. MATHERON

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